

Press Club Vote: Women Still Out

By Elizabeth Shelton

A move to admit women as members of the National Press Club failed yesterday even though more than two-thirds of the members voting in a mail referendum favored it.

A two-thirds majority of the club's 1,063 active members is required to change the constitution. Of the 769 ballots returned by mail, 552 voted affirmatively, 243 said no and four abstained. A total of 709 affirmative votes would have effected the change.

Proponents of the change said they plan to raise the issue again in January and predicted passage.

On a second question which depended on approval of the first question, the vote was almost evenly split on whether to retain special sex-segregated facilities, such as the men's poker room and a ladies' lounge.

The vote was 373 for limited segregation; 368 against. There were 28 abstentions.

The results of the balloting by mail were reported last night to the club's 12-member board of governors by Donald R. Larrabee, rep-

resenting the official election committee which counted the votes.

Proponents of changing the club's 65-year-old stag membership policy said they hope to revive the matter at the club's annual membership meeting in January. At that time, the constitution could be amended by a two-thirds vote of those present at the meeting.

Despite defeat of the proposal, proponents called the vote "heartening."

Until 10 years ago, the club restricted women journalists covering events, including the speeches of national and international leaders, to seats in the ballroom's balcony while members and their dining guests had access to the public figures.

Since that time, women reporters covering speakers at the club have been permitted to dine with the men. However, during the day, they are restricted otherwise to the East Lounge, which is open to women for luncheon.

While the constitutional amendment controversy has been going on, some members have accused their colleagues of considering the admission of women merely to improve the club's financial condition through additional dues. However, club officers have reported to the contrary that the club's \$100,000 deficit has been abolished, and women's potential dues are not needed.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) recently protested the club's continued segregation.

There has, for many years, been speculation that the National Press Club and its sister organization, the Women's National Press Club would eventually merge. However, official proposals have not been considered by either club.